

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1451

By Hargrove

A RESOLUTION to commend and honor Michael Feldman, host of the public radio program *Whad'Ya Know*.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to honor and applaud those estimable humorists who, through their natural talents and unflagging commitment to shining a light on life, have contributed significantly to our nation's diverse and dynamic culture; and

WHEREAS, one such noteworthy person is Michael Feldman, who has amused public radio listeners for more than twenty years with his keen wit and clever comedy; and

WHEREAS, Michael Feldman is the host of the radio program *Whad'Ya Know*, which is broadcast from Madison, Wisconsin, carried by more than 300 Public Radio International affiliates, and has more than 1.5 million fans; billed as "a 25-year overnight sensation," Mr. Feldman was dubbed by the Wall Street Journal as "the king of small talk radio"; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Feldman earned a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Wisconsin and taught English for eight years before becoming a cabdriver. He then worked his way into radio, first as a volunteer, then doing a weekday breakfast show from a "greasy spoon" diner, and ultimately launching the radio program *Whad'Ya Know* in 1985; and

WHEREAS, every show begins with Michael Feldman asking the audience, "Whad'Ya Know?" and the audience roaring back, "Not Much! You?"; Mr. Feldman follows with a few topical jokes for his monologue before launching into a witty rapport with the audience members, quiz-show participants, and the unusual guests that characterize the program; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Feldman's jazz trio (John Thulin, Jeff Hamaan, and Clyde Stubblefield) provides what Jackie Gleason would call "traveling music," as he works his way through the audience to pick a player for the quiz-show portion of the program; before each question,

Michael Feldman's sidekick and man Friday, Jim Packard, lists the categories (People, Places, Current Events, Science, and Things You Should Have Learned in School) and announces the tally; most shows end up with somebody throwing a dart at a map, with someone from that city being called up, in real time, to describe what their city has to offer a visitor; *Whad'Ya Know* is often unscripted and always unpredictable, and such is the charm of Michael Feldman; and

WHEREAS, Michael Feldman first discussed the idea of a freewheeling radio program with Wisconsin Public Radio Manager Jack Mitchell in 1985 after being fired from WGN, a large commercial radio station in Chicago; Mr. Mitchell explains, "The program...is really just an excuse for him to talk to people, spin off of what they have to say and react. To me, he was a radio natural. He was funny; he was spontaneous; it was live radio at its best."; and

WHEREAS, like many radio personalities, Mr. Feldman is an introvert; given his own shyness, hosting *Whad'Ya Know* is beneficial for him personally, he says, because it forces him to mix with folks, who, he notes, are generally interesting, enjoyable, and reassuring; and

WHEREAS, *Whad'Ya Know's* producer, Chris Bannon, has said that Michael Feldman's fans generally fall into three categories: precocious sixth graders, young parents who appreciate the program's appropriateness for families, and the more typical NPR news listener in young middle age; Mr. Feldman has a direct relationship with these listeners, and his program depends upon callers and an in-house audience; and

WHEREAS, Michael Feldman is deceptively skilled at interviewing and drawing comedy out of people, and his commitment to crafting consistently entertaining shows is always paramount. Despite the show's spontaneous nature, Mr. Feldman is undeniably a master of directing conversation in such a way that it allows him to deliver one quick joke and witty retort after another; and

WHEREAS, when asked why he does what he does, Michael Feldman wrote, "I thought of myself as having three radio-useful talents: I could free associate under pressure, I could work an audience, and I could talk on a telephone...This modest box of tools were sufficient for this trade, or so it seems some 25 years of having no real job/having a face made for radio later. The caveat for me was that I needed a live audience to get nervous in front of in order to perform and to exploit for material, since I didn't come with expertise."; and

WHEREAS, one of Michael Feldman's many loyal radio listeners from Tennessee is Representative Jere Hargrove, a longtime *Whad'Ya Know* fan who has enjoyed many laughs thanks to Mr. Feldman over the years; and

WHEREAS, throughout his twenty-five years in radio, Michael Feldman has demonstrated an extraordinary ability to entertain others, winning the honest admiration and hearty guffaws of the many thousands of his loyal listeners across the nation; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby commend and honor Michael Feldman for his bountiful life of exceptional humor and keen wit and for his invaluable contributions to America's well-being by bringing welcome laughter to millions of radio listeners.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we offer Mr. Feldman our best wishes for every success and much happiness in the future.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.